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Chochmah/Wisdom and Pele/Wonders

ועל נפלאותיך, וטובותיך, שבכל עת וכו' - "And for Your wonders, and Your goodness, at all times, evening, morning, and afternoon."

Hashem does goodness with us, as we said earlier in *Shemoneh Esrei*, הגומל חסדים טובים - "Who bestows good kindnesses." Besides for that, however, Hashem also bestows on us a more inner dimension of His kindness, which is called *niflaos*, "wonders", from the word "*pele*".

Seeing The Chochmah/Wisdom

Our Rabbis explain that there are two root systems of how Hashem runs the world. A hint to this is in the word *Beraishis*, which can be read, "*Beis raishiyos*" - there are "two beginnings". [One way is '*chochmah*' (wisdom) and the other way is called '*pele*' (wonder).]

One of these ways is called *chochmah* (wisdom), as the possuk says, "All of them You created with wisdom." The world was created with the "*chochmah*" of the Creator. We also mentioned in the "*Asher Yotzar*" blessing that man is created with *chochmah*.

Being that this is so, man has the fundamental task of learning Torah, which is the main revelation of the *chochmah* of Hashem. From learning the words of Torah, one can be connected to Hashem's wisdom, and then see Creation from a lens of *chochmah*, from the perspective that he has gained.

Chazal say, "Who is wise? One who learns from all people." Not only can a person learn *chochmah* from all people, but he can see *chochmah* in all of Creation as well, when he deeply reflects about Creation, using his intellect; for all of Creation was created with *chochmah*. Looking into the Torah can enable one to see *chochmah* in all of Creation, being that Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world. Chazal said, "A person sins only when a *ruach shtus* (spirit of folly) enters him^[1] - in other words, when loses his perspective of *chochmah*."

That all described one side to the Creation: *chochmah*. It is for this reason that we need to learn Torah and delve in it. It doesn't matter what you are learning; in any case, learning Torah is always about seeing the *chochmah* of Hashem, and then to be able to see the rest of Creation from that perspective of *chochmah*.

'Pele': Seeing The 'Wonder' of Creation

The second side of how Hashem runs Creation is called "*pele*" (wonder), from the word "*mafli laasos*", "a wonder to make." Not only is there *chochmah* in all of Creation; it is all a *pele*, a wonder, which is the inner essence behind all of the *chochmah*.

The *Rema* says that we are made of body and soul, and this combination is a *pele*, a wonder, which we thank Hashem for in the blessing of *Asher Yotzar*.

Just as we explained that there is a perspective of *chochmah* towards Creation, so can a person have a perspective of *pele*, towards Creation. It is the root of how Hashem created the world, so to speak. The inner essence of Creation is that it is all a "*mafli laasos*"; that it is all a *pele*.

The Two Viewpoints of Creation

Generally speaking, there are two ways to view the Creation - through *chochmah* (wisdom) and through *pele* (wonder).

Through the way of *chochmah*, a person can reflect into Creation and try to comprehend as much as he can, but "it is not upon you to complete the task", and therefore, a person never gets to the end.

When it comes to the parts you cannot comprehend logically, you need to access the deeper perspective, *pele*, so that you can become connected with the concept of "*mafli laasos*".[\[2\]](#)

Reflecting On How All Of Creation Is A Wonder

When it comes to the things we understand, the amount that we do not understand far eclipses the amount that we do understand. The Torah is "longer than the earth and wider than the sea".[\[3\]](#) Even if we would all be wise and know the entire Torah, it would be never be all-inclusive. The Torah is much bigger than what we can understand in it. "*Toras Hashem Temimah*" - it is said that the Torah always stays *temimah*, it always stays perfect, because it cannot be understood entirely.[\[4\]](#) Even what we understand in it is but a drop in the ocean.

So although it is important for us to try to understand the *chochmah* of this world - via learning the Torah - still, it is barely scratching the surface of Hashem's wisdom. Only when we connect to *pele*, to the "*mafli laasos*" that is this world, can a person see the broader scale of things.

When a person thinks into the words of Torah, he can realize that he doesn't understand it all. If one thinks he knows the whole Torah, or even if he thinks he knows most of it - either he is delusional, or he is arrogant. So too, just like we can't understand all of Torah, so do we not understand this Creation. There is very little we understand in the Torah, in the Creation, and in Hashem's ways of how He runs this world.

In Creation, there are four groupings of creatures: people, animals, living things (plants), and non-living beings (i.e. rocks). If we think into each of these things and we wonder why all of these creations are necessary, it is baffling. There are billions of people in the world. Why are they all necessary? Ever since Adam HaRishon, there have been so many people. Why were they all necessary? Somehow, they are all necessary, but how?

Koheles said that we cannot understand why it is all necessary. Although we know and believe that Hashem created it all for His glory, we do not actually understand how it all leads to His glory.

That's only regarding people. As for animals, there are many more animals than people, and we surely don't understand why they are all necessary. There are an infinite amount of animals, and we do not understand why they are all needed. And we surely don't understand why each animal's every

movement and action is somehow needed. This is like the words of the Chazon Ish^[5], that when a person has quiet time to reflect, he can realize that this world is like one big and closed riddle.

(Dovid HaMelech said he doesn't understand why there must be insane people, and Hashem showed him how.)

As for plants, we don't understand either why there must be so many plants. We can understand why we need some of them, but as for most of the plants in the world, we don't know why they are here. And why must there be so many rocks? Why do we need so many planets and stars and galaxies? Anything we do understand about them is a drop in the ocean. It is all a "*pele*", a wonder. We don't comprehend it.

Sometimes we can see the *middah k'neged middah* (measure for measure) which Hashem uses. But there is mostly *pele* in Hashem's ways, which we never understand.

The simple reason why it has to be this way is because we cannot understand Hashem's ways, so we should not try to understand. As Chazal say, when you run into questions, "return to your place"-realize that you don't understand anyway. But the deeper reason why it must be this way is because it is precisely when you realize how this Creation is a *pele*, that Hashem is called the "*Alufo shel Olam*" (Chief of the universe), which is from the word "*pele*".

The more you see the "*pele*" (wonder) of Creation, the more you can connect to the *Alufo shel olam*, and you realize more and more that everything is a *pele*. When you are connected to it, you reach the depth of *emunah* (faith in Hashem).

So *chochmah*/wisdom is the ability to see what you can understand, and *emunah* is the ability to see the parts you don't understand. That is really the depth behind *emunah*.

Without realizing that creation is all a *pele*, a person might have *emunah* but he doesn't reach the depth of *emunah*; he doesn't reach the root of it. The root of *emunah* is to realize, that is world is all a *pele*! You can understand Creation until the end of the perception of your *chochmah*. But when you see things that are *pele*, you can't understand, and this is where you need to make use of *emunah*.

Hanhagas HaMishpat and Hanhagas HaYichud

This concept was always applicable, but nowadays, it has particular meaning.

The *Ramchal* writes in *sefer Daas Tevunos* that there are two ways of how Hashem runs the world - *hanhagas hamishpat* (system of justice) and *hanhagas hayichud* (system of His union).

The first way, *hanhagas hamishpat*, is based on the system of *chochmah*/wisdom. In this system, there is *middah k'neged middah* ("measure for measure"). There is *cheshbon hanefesh* (self-accounting) accordingly. Hashem deals with a person according to how each person acts toward Him; as the Gemara says, "With the measurement that a person measures, that is how Hashem deals with him." Being that this is so, a person has an *avodah* to see the *middah k'neged middah* in everything.

The second way is called *hanhagas hayichud*: in this system, the way Hashem runs the world is entirely incomprehensible. It is run through *pele*, not through *chochmah*.

We need to be able to see both *chochmah* and *pele* in Creation. Some are connected more with *chochmah/hanhagas hamishpat* and some more with *pele/emunah/hanhagas hayichud*, being that each person has different soul roots and specific tasks on this world. But we all need to be able to see both.

In more recent times, we find that different *Gedolim* had differing methods of self-introspection towards the events of the world. Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer *zt"l* would think into each thing that happened, and to see how it was *middah k'neged middah*. The Chazon Ish differed; his opinion was that since we cannot understand Hashem's ways, although we must improve ourselves and accept things with *emunah*, we still cannot understand why Hashem does what he does.

These two different approaches represent the differing systems of *chochmah/hanhagas hamishpat* and *pele/emunah/hanhagas hayichud*.

The End of Days: "Hanhagas HaYichud"

The *Ramchal* says in *Daas Tevunos* that in previous generations, Hashem ran the world mainly through *hanhagas hamishpat*, but as we get closer to the end of days, Hashem runs the world mainly through *hanhagas hayichud*.

These days, more than ever, there are things happening which we don't understand. We see *tzaddikim* suffering and the wicked being successful and happy. We feel like Hashem is abandoning His land [Eretz Yisrael], and that the wicked can rule freely. *Tzaddikim*, and those who fear G-d, are despised.[\[6\]](#)

In the End of Days, which we are in, what we are mainly seeing is *hanhagas hayichud/pele*. We can't understand it or comprehend it. This was said a few hundred years ago by the *Ramchal*. Understandably, now that we are much closer to the end, there is much more *hanhagas hayichud*. It makes life all seem like one giant *pele*.

This was always true, but now it's even more applicable. Our main *avodah* in our times is therefore to connect to His *hanhagas hayichud*, to *pele*, to *emunah*, to "*My thoughts are not their thoughts.*" The closer we get to the end of the 6,000 year era, to the complete redemption, every day there is more and more *pele* unfolding.

When we study the writings of our Rabbis, we can see how all of their words are coming true, in our times. Their words were written with *ruach hakodesh* (the holy spirit). We are in the depths of the end of history; we are in a situation where it is all *pele*.

If one doesn't see how it's all *pele*, he is kind of blind. Either it's because his head is so filled with *shtus* (nonsense) that he doesn't see it; or, it's because he's so connected with *chochmah* that he doesn't see the necessity for *emunah*....

Without seeing how Creation is all a *pele*, a person isn't connected to the way Hashem is running the world now in this generation, which is through *hanhagas hayichud*.

There is *pele* with regards to our *ruchniyus* (spirituality), such as the fact that we are a body and soul, which is a great wonder; and there is *pele* with regards to how Hashem runs the world.

Pele: The Good and Evil Mixed Into Everything

Ever since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, which was *tov v'ra*, good and evil mixed together, there is always a mix of good and evil in everything. This is all a *pele* - a great wonder - that so much good and evil can be so mixed together. As time goes on, there is more of a mix of good and evil, and the *pele* becomes even greater and more baffling.

If you think into it, you can see how Creation has become entirely a *pele*, being that there is so much good and evil mixed into everything.

Holiness and Evil In Our Times

When there is *pele* in everything, we must understand deeply, that this creates great contradictions – as follows.

On one hand, we see much good taking place in our times. There is an increase of Torah learning in our times, which is accessible by anyone who exerts himself a little, in this generation. And with little effort, a person these days can also merit that his heart be opened, to feel holiness and all kinds of holy thoughts, until he can merit the holiest feeling of all – to recognize Hashem.

In previous generations, it was much harder to succeed in Torah and to recognize Hashem. In these days, much less exertion is required. The ‘gates of *chochmah*’ and the ‘gates of the heart’ are opened in our times anyone who tries even a little.

The channels of *chochmah* have been allowed to come down, along with much opportunity for *kirvas Hashem* (closeness with G-d) and much *giluy* (revelation) of Hashem; it is readily available in our times, in a way that is unprecedented. But along with this great outpouring of spiritual revelation, there has come a tremendous *tum’ah* (spiritual impurity) at the same time, which counters it.

It used to be that spirituality was found in Yerushalayim, in the *Beis HaMikdash*, with the impurity being found only in dark and secluded places. Today, the impurity is in the very place itself where holiness is found. “There is no distance between Gan Eden and Gehinnom except for the size of a hairsbreadth”, as Chazal say. In the place itself where there is supposed to be the most holiness, *that* is where all the evil and impurity is invading.

The baffling situation today is that a person these days sees how much evil there is even within the holiness. He sees a great contradiction: he sees how there is much Torah that has come to the world of Torah today, but he also sees how much impurity has come into Torah world - the ‘50th Gate of Impurity’ itself, entering into the world of Torah.

A person sees how hard we are trying to become holier, but at the same time, how so much impurity is coming in at the same time – in a way that’s very hard to separate from, once it’s here. Evil is being fought, but it’s coming in just as fast.

Without getting into all the details of what’s going on in this generation, we must know that it’s all a *pele*, a wonder, which baffles the mind. It is a terrible mixture of good and evil at once. Hashem created it this way, and we can’t understand it, no matter how much we try to understand what is going on in this generation.

We are simply baffled at all that is going on! We are baffled by how much spirituality is available today, and how it is contradicted with so much evil. The ‘inside’ [sheltered, Torah world] is going out into the ‘outside’ [the outside world and its influences], and the ‘outside’ [influences] is coming into the ‘inside’ [the sheltered, Torah world].

Holiness is being uprooted! It used to be uprooted slowly, but these days it is being uprooted instantly, like an animal devouring another animal alive. The reason why this is happening nowadays is because since the holiness and impurity are very much mixed together, the impurity can spread very quickly into the holiness and contaminate it.

When a person wonders about this, he wonders: how can we survive this terrible mix of good and evil that we face today??

Fighting The Influences of The Media: What Price Are We Paying?

Here is a clear and simple example of what's going on.

On one hand, there is a war being fought against influences of the media upon us. At the same time, everything from the outside world is being allowed to come into us!

With one hand, people are 'building' the third *Beis HaMikdash*, and with the other hand, they are destroying (remaining connected to the previous two 'destructions', and trying to 'destroy' the third *Beis HaMikdash* as well).

There are those who fear Hashem today, who are fighting wars of holiness. But with those same hands in which they fight for holy causes, those very same people are sending their sons and daughters to go work in these places that endorse those holy causes - allowing for a terrible mix of good and evil at once.

There are now '*Chareidi*' radio shows from various rabbis who give *shiurim* to people all over the world, who are available at the end of each *shiur* to answer all questions for anyone who calls in, in the amount of time that spans the blink of an eye. This is all a disturbing mix of good and evil taking place at once.

With one hand a person is building, with the other hand he is destroying. This is just one example of a 'mix of good and evil' that we are found in today. Almost in every place in the world, this is the situation. We are not in living in a 'clear world'; we are rather in a mixture, where there is much confusion.

In Conclusion

When one is connected to *chochmah* and he also connects to *pele/emunah* - making sure to understand that all of Creation is in a state of *pele* right now - he will have some understanding of how to deal with the situation.

Our *avodah*, on one hand, is to have *mesirus nefesh* these days. But at the same time, we need to deeply understand the situation we are in, seeing how it's all a disturbing mix of good and evil together, and then when we recoil from how much evil is taking place wherever we turn (even amidst good and holy causes). This will help us become aware of the evil we face today, and then we will have much more of a chance of success, to avoid the evil.

All of Creation is a *pele*, but in our generation especially it has become entirely a state of *pele*. May the Creator merit us to see the *niflaos* (wonders), just as when we left Egypt - where we saw *niflaos*.

[1] Sotah 2a

[2] Editor's Note: This is reminiscent of a saying of Rav Dessler zt"l (which the author has quoted at other times), that "The point where the intellect ends, is the point where *emunah* (faith) begins."

[3] Iyov 11:9

[4] In the name of the Baal Shem Tov

[5] In the beginning of sefer *Emunah U'Bitachon*

[6] See Sotah 49a

Source: <http://bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-156-wonders-past-and-present>